



Marriage #3: Why are we different?

Ephesians 5: 22-33

Intro: What's the problem? The controversy?

This is our third and final week in this section of Ephesians. We have talked about how in marriage, the husband and wife cleave to each other. And we introduced the idea of submission last week, by explaining that if you choose to be filled with the Holy Spirit, then you are called to submit to one another in the body of Christ. If you missed these, you can catch the audio and my manuscript on our website.

One of the most controversial questions you can ask: do differences in gender extend beyond physicality? No one can deny that physically men and women are different. The controversy is-- is the stuff on the inside different too? Are our brains different? Are our needs, abilities, and emotions different? Is there a difference in maleness and femaleness that extends beyond the physical into your soul? Intuitively you may want to say yes, but as soon as you say it, it is assumed that you have an agenda... a fear that you are putting people in stereotyped roles.

If you have taken a freshmen psychology course or developmental biology, you know there have been tons of studies:

Child development course:

1. Boy babies push an obstacle over. Girl babies go around it
2. Boy babies prefer lower complexities of stimuli. Girl babies prefer higher complexities.
3. Girl babies hear jazz, heart beats faster. Boy babies just ignore it.

Carol Gilligan, professor at Harvard, published a controversial book that supported gender differences: in a different voice 1982.

- > when men and women have same job they go about it differently. Give 2 CEOs the same profit goals with same resources-- a man and a woman can both meet the goal, but they will do it in different ways.
- > She concluded that Men see themselves maturing as they separate, become independent, and make impact. Women see themselves maturing as they attach, interdependent, networks. Men have gift of independence, women have gift of interdependence.

On the other side in the academy, Judith Butler, professor at UC Berkeley wrote Gender Trouble in 1990, saying that so-called sex differences are just a product of the environment we are in. 'culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts in time.' She is one of the most influential voices for those who say there is no core, ontological difference between the gender.

In the church, the debate is just as heated.

- > **No difference**-- lets just ignore the passages that talk about difference, but to ignore certain parts of the Bible is to undermine the authority of the whole.
- > **Some Conservatives/ evangelicals say YES there are differences.** But they have foolishly tried to baptize differences that aren't really in Scripture. So they'll talk about the traditional family. Husband should work, wife should stay home. doesn't say this in the Bible. Nor wife should cook, man should do checkbook. In the pre-industrial age, husband and wife produced goods together, both raised the children. In the industrial age, someone had to leave to go to work. Bible is truth written for all time and space, it would never nail itself down to such parochial specificity as the last 150 years. Bible is



truth-- for people in every time and space. P31, wife into real estate and investments, into sewing, child rearing AND husband is into it all as well. Bible doesn't tell you what a traditional family is but it does tell you there are differences between men and women, husbands and wives that are subtle, nuanced, and way more profound than merely a task/job description.

So when Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives different instructions to men and women, are they born out of the wisdom of a good and loving Creator or is it the agenda of a dominant patriarchy that is designed to subvert women? Is God good? Can we trust Scripture? The passage touches on so much pain, so many deep questions.

Knowing that this passage in particular is controversial, you must remember that depending on the culture in which Christianity is preached, it is either seen as radically subversive and liberating or horribly rigid and reactionary. The Gospel doesn't change, the instructions don't change, but the posture of the recipients affects how it is heard. So in a society or country with an oppressive government or leader, Christianity is seen as subversive. And its true because the church has always challenged the idea that the state is the final moral arbiter.

Stott: the way Jesus treated women, children, and slaves was offensively subversive. Jesus forgave women, talked to them, empowered them to be His witnesses-- they were the first to find the empty tomb. He let children approach him, sit with him.

But in this country and others in the west, the church is often seen as horribly reactionary. And that's true because the church has always challenged the fact that the individual is the final moral arbiter. In a culture that values freedom and individual choice, unhindered pursuit of my particular dream. Church has always said, you are not your own. You were bought with a price. If you receive that gift, then as we saw last week, by consequence you submit to one another, to something beyond yourself.

This passage is radically subversive in some societies and rigidly reactionary in others. Same words, different recipients.

Remembering that the purpose of marriage is a covenant friendship that gets you ready to meet God, my prayer is that your heart would be open to what God has said are the roles in marriage for men and women.

Read 5: 22-24

Wives Submit to your husbands

This is the first instruction. Two important caveats:

- A. Wives are to submit to husbands. **Women in general are not called to submit to men in general.** This is a specific, singular relationship, grounded in a covenant choice. It is written in the middle voice-- submit yourself to your own, peculiar (!) husband.
- B. **'in everything' does not mean in everything.** If your husband is abusive, wants you to do something illegal, then just like the disciples can say to the authorities in Acts 5.29 we must obey God and not you. Wives submit to their husband in everything that is coherent and congruent to submission to the Lord. If submitting to your husband takes you out of submission to the Lord, don't do it.



Remind that submission in general comes with the salvation package, in the Body of Christ:

1. Biblical submission is always for another person's good, to serve them, to see them empowered, to see them mature.
2. Biblical submission comes from our Spirit filled capacity, not from our empty dregs. It is from a posture of generous dignity that we can put someone else ahead of us.
3. Biblical submission out of reverent fear of Christ can never be demanded, it can only be earned, it can only be given. **It can only come from the middle voice**-- I choose to fill myself with the Holy Spirit with the result that I choose to submit myself to others.

Reason? Husband is the head

Why does Paul give this special instruction for wives? Then build it out with instructions to husbands to love and wives to respect. Wives are already submitting because of v. 21 and by extrapolation, husbands are submitting to wives. Mutual submission is already in marriage because it is in the body of Christ. **Because the husband is the head. Because there is headship in marriage, there are different instructions.** Headship takes us to Genesis 1 and 2. It is in the creation narrative, at the very beginning, that we see the equality and the difference in marriage.

What do men and women have in common?:

Gen. 1:27 **So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.**

Men and women are equal image bearers of God.

Image: An image functions to express. It is often said that the bible represents God anthropomorphically, more accurately, a human being is theomorphic: made like God so that God can communicate himself to people. He gave people ears to show that he hears the cry of the afflicted and eyes to show that he sees the plight of the pitiful (Ps 94.9), mouth to show He wants to communicate and reveal Himself.

Bearing the image of God is a significant gift. We reflect God. We are mirrors. So you might imagine that men and women are both mirrors. But as you can see, if you just take 2 identical mirrors, you get the same reflecting power. In reality, men and women bear/reflect the image of God differently **and by themselves**, incompletely. Tim Keller uses this illustration and says: A more accurate representation might be aluminum foil and glass-- both of these things have reflective properties, but by themselves the reflection it is distorted and unclear. However, if you put the aluminum foil behind the glass, you get a mirror and this perfectly reflects the person looking into it. Male and female TOGETHER reflect God, in a way that individually they can't. They are equal image bearers, but also different and distinct, like glass and aluminum foil.

We see the distinction between men and women in several ways:

2 different origins: the man, Adam, was created out of the ground, in fact Adam is the Hebrew word for ground. But the woman, Eve, was created out of Adam. This is significant. God didn't run out of dirt, he didn't forget how to turn dirt into people, and he wasn't trying out a new manufacturing line. God isn't random. He deliberately puts Adam to sleep, deliberately takes a rib,



and deliberately makes the woman in a different way than he did the man. When Adam sees her, he says at last-- this is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. I am her source. She shall be called Isha, because from Ish she was taken. The narrator names Adam by his relation to the ground, but Adam names himself Ish, in relation to his wife, Isha.

2 different tasks:

- > the man is given the task of naming. God makes stuff and Adam names it. In the Bible, you don't just name something so you can slap a label on it and tell it apart from other stuff. If you name something, you are shaping it, taking charge over it. A name was a way to shape their destiny (we still do this, famous relatives, special meanings, NOT high school girlfriends...) It is the exercise of a superior over an inferior-- kings would change the name of the people they defeated. *Bring order to chaos by naming.*
- > The reason he is naming stuff is because he is seeking a helper fit for him. When he at last meets the woman, he says this is it. This is the helper fit for me. This is the one who corresponds to me. Her task is to be a help. It sounds so demeaning! It makes it sound like 'daddy's little helper'. There is nothing diminutive about it. It's an extremely sophisticated term. Most of the time it is used to describe God.

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'help':

Psa. 20:2 May he send you help from the sanctuary
and give you support from Zion!

Psa. 70:5 **But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!**

**You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay!**

Psa. 121:1 **I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?**

**2 My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.**

Psa. 124:8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

Psa. 146:5 **Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD his God,**

"The word *helper*, used for God 16 out of 19 times it appears in the OT, signifies the woman's essential contribution, not inadequacy." Think about it, If you help someone, it means you have a resource they don't. You have something they need, something they are lacking, a power they don't have. So this implies deficiencies in Adam, resources that he does not have. You can't help someone if you don't have something they don't. (right now I can help Bennett with spanish, because he is just doing the alphabet, or I can coach u10 soccer players, but not middle schoolers)

- > If you help, you can either bring yourself under him, empower him, so he is brought to a place where he can do it himself, OR you can replace him, do it for him. But if you do it for him, you're not helping. Helping is a specific use of power that enables and empowers.



In many ways, Genesis says the same thing about men and women that Carol Gilligan said at Harvard: they are different. Often, men look to be completed by powerfully subduing the world through work. Often women look to be completed by receiving and becoming part of an interdependent network, a helper fit. One has the gift of independence. One has the gift of consensus building. Which one is **always** the right answer? Neither! We need both. Doesn't mean that women don't name animals or men don't help. **What makes you masculine or feminine is not what you do, but why you do it.** Men can help in order to achieve and have an impact. Women achieve in order to nurture or help.

Because these complementary roles together reflect the image of God, we can see the total package in the Word made flesh-- Jesus the revelation of God. **Jesus is ultimate male, because He gives us new names. He sets us free.**

Jesus is ultimate model of femininity because he submitted to us for our good, he came under us to empower us, to set us free, he had resources we did not have, that we desperately needed.

2 different origins, 2 different tasks

2 Different Consequences

Whether you are a church person or not, we know that things went bad very quickly, Adam and Eve disobeyed God. They didn't trust Him. They stepped over the line on the one thing to which He said no. So God judges them. The consequences are played out in their roles as wife and husband.

Gen. 3:16 To the woman he said,
"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you."

For the woman, the consequences of judgment are played out in her relationships. Painful toil in childbearing, brokenness with her husband. Desire is a desire to rule, to dominate-- we see the same grammatical structure when God speaks to Cain in 4.7 Sin's desire is for you, but you must rule over it. The woman's gift of interdependence, networking, relationships, can become coercion and control.

Gen. 3:17 And to Adam he said...
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

For the husband, his consequence is also played out in relationships. He becomes a tyrant. Independence always has a tendency towards autonomy, isolation, and dogmatism. For the man, his work is also judged-- the man's need and desire to have an impact on the world will become an idol-- and you will always be frustrated because it will never give you what you want.



You might be tempted to say, this is just rank stereotyping-- the macho, silent male, the marlboro man tyrant, and the dependent, manipulative, self-centered cinderella, teen prom queen. These are just gender stereotypes. This is what is wrong with Christianity.

But, Stereotypes are just masculinity and femininity gone bad. The fall exposed the caricatures and logical ends of the selfish manifestation of our gender roles. I can't apologize for that. God said, because of your disobedience and lack of trust, the whole thing's broke-- your relationship with your maker is broke and the relationship between husbands and wives is broke. We are just 14 verses but what feels like light years away from-- they were both naked and were not ashamed and now they are at each other's throats.

Irony: The ground from which Adam is made, and which is supposed to provide for him, becomes his enemy. The helper becomes a hindrance. The namer has become a tyrant. This is the pain of marriage. Differences that were supposed to bring dignity and delight have been corrupted. But it doesn't mean we discard them. Going back to Ephesians 5, this is what Paul is pleading for-- that husbands and wives would give their best energy to reversing the fall.

Redeem what was lost

He says, remember that you were made for so much more than this. You were made to be one, to be unified in your differences. You are supposed to cleave, to hold fast to each other, be naked and unashamed-- that this person can see all of who you are, speak into your life, and have access to get you ready to face God.

Christ gave Himself for the church, in order to rescue her from the effects of the fall. Now He has franchised part of the salvation means into marriage. It's a mystery!! But in the same way that Christ loves the church, marriage can be a vehicle of redemption to overturn the effects of the fall. So husbands: love. Wives: respect. Love overcomes 'he shall rule over you'; being a tyrant, using sheer force to get things done. Respect overcomes 'your desire shall be for your husband'. They are different instructions, but they speak to the deepest longings of our created soul.

What is love?

- > Love is always a move from independence and isolation towards your wife.
- > It is giving oneself up to somebody-- selfless, self-giving.
- > Christ loved the church by dying a horrible, painful death for people who did not deserve it
- > Love is deliberately thinking about how your wife receives love and doing those things-- spending time, giving gifts, acts of service, non-sexual physical affection, words.
- > Often the way she feels loved is not your most natural way to express love. I love with words, comes naturally to me, words don't do much for Laurel. She feels loved by quality time together, and sometimes that is the very last resource I want to give. Love is always giving oneself up for someone else.



What is respect?

Words: In our culture, respect is primarily given through words, language, and speech. (In some cultures you bow, you avoid eye contact, you walk behind, you take off your shoes, etc). Generally, wives, you are better at words than we is. Your tone of voice, the expression on your face, the words you use, the way you talk to him and about him reveal your respect or lack thereof.

Sticking up for him: I meet with a small group of guys and I asked them this week to share examples of when we felt respected by our wives. We all knew they were there, but it was hard for us to articulate what respect is-- more than just encouragement and kindness, not really deference. We concluded that we feel respect when our wife sticks up for us-- it might mean that she come to our defense with in-laws and parents, or that she shares with a friend something she appreciates about us, or when she trusts us about a decision we have made. Respect doesn't mean 'always agree', it means when we're wrong, you don't act like its a statement on the whole parcel-- you carefully and specifically compartmentalize our wrongness.

Assignment

If you are married, ask your spouse this week-- what do I do that makes you feel loved? What do I do that makes you feel respected? Men take the initiative on this, don't wait for your wife to ask. Then listen. If you aren't married, ask a friend who is-- how do you love, when do you feel respect? It is a way we can encourage each other in the body of Christ.

Conclusion

Whether you are married or not, a spouse is a vain hope for redemption. Jesus is always our best hope. He is our head who comes alongside us as our help. He is the one who loves by giving up all His glory for our good. He is the one who respects by standing at the throne of God sticking up for us. He is our companions who never leaves. He has come into the world to rescue us.